

529 How Can We Overcome In Jesus?

Phil Sanders

God's Answers to Life's Questions

Peter said in 1 Peter 5:8, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." The devil is not your friend but your enemy. He wants to win over you and take your soul. The devil has been fighting against Christians since the beginning of time, and we can never take for granted that he will leave us alone. Perhaps you've had a serious temptation in your life and succumbed to it. We're asking how we can find victory in Christ to overcome the challenges of Satan in our world today.

Everywhere you look it seems that Satan is holding out a temptation. Television, movies, the internet, even a daily newspaper will have challenges to our souls. Seductive women, sexually tantalizing stories, innuendos, foul language, and glorified sin. Many of the ads we see ask Christians to go places and participate that are shameful. The world is indeed worldly and the devil knows how to entice people to love the world. John said in 1 John 2:15-17, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that *is* in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever." The devil knows just how to use lust and pride to get our attention and convince us to give in to sin.

James said in James 1:13-15, "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death." The devil uses enticing lusts and our pride to draw us into his fatal trap. When we give in to those desires and act upon them, we sin. Sin leads to spiritual death. Paul said in Romans 6:23, "The wages of sin is death." Those who refuse to repent and persist in sin will surely find that they will suffer the punishment of being lost eternally.

The Hebrew writer said in Hebrews 10:26-31, "For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, "*Vengeance is Mine, I will repay*," says the Lord. And again, "*The Lord will judge His people*." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Being lost is the worst thing that could happen to anybody.

The Bible teaches us, however, there is hope in overcoming sin and the devil. Solomon said in Proverbs 20:30-31, "There is no wisdom and no understanding And no counsel against the LORD. The horse is prepared for the day of battle, But victory belongs to the LORD." The devil cannot defeat the Lord. No matter how strong or cunning the devil is, he is still no match for the Lord. We need to have confidence that regardless of the challenges, by faith we can find victory in the Lord. We can win over temptation and sin through the power of Jesus in our lives. We can never despair.

John said in 1 John 5:1-5, "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His

commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome. For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" Faith in God can make a difference in your life and your eternity. Faith is the victory! When we believe and obey, we can win.

First, we can overcome sin. Jesus said in John 8:34, "Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin." Sin can overwhelm you and enslave you to its lusts, but that is not the end of the story. John 8:36 says, "Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed." It's Jesus who has the power to forgive us from sin and release its hold on us. In Romans 6:17-18, Paul said, "But God be thanked that *though* you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness." God delivers us from sin, forgives us and frees us.

To the Christian who is fighting the devil, James said in James 4:7-8, "Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse *your* hands, *you* sinners; and purify *your* hearts, *you* double-minded." When you give your life to God, submit to His will, and become a Christian, you come to God's side. Because God is with you, when you resist the devil, the devil flees! He knows he cannot win when God is in your life. Our task is to purify our hearts and stop being double-minded about God. We need to give Him our full loyalty!

Many people get the idea they cannot change, but people can change. Change in the Scriptures is called "repentance"; and in every place the Bible assumes man can repent. Repentance is a change of heart that leads to a change of behavior. When the prodigal son came to his senses, he confessed his sin and came home to his father. It is easier to decide we can't change than to honestly examine ourselves and make the needed changes. Repentance means we have to look ourselves squarely in the eye and admit what we have been and done. Those who will repent can find freedom and forgiveness.

I want to tell a true story of forgiveness and freedom. In 1935 in Oklahoma a family with eight children lost their father. The oldest child, a girl was 16 years old; and the youngest child, a boy was two. The mother went to work as a nurse to feed the family, and the children had to spend much time raising themselves. The youngest boy as time went by got into the wrong crowd and began to do all the wrong things rebellious teens do. He often drank and committed crimes. He would rather steal than pay for anything, even when he had the money. As a young adult he spent many nights in jail.

He was a strong, young man; and if he had been drinking would tear up his jail cell. He was wanted for theft and burglary in several states. Once when he came home to visit family in the 1950s, he stole an adding machine and was put into prison for four years. *This* got his attention. While he was there, his oldest sister and her husband came to visit and would talk to him about the Bible and his soul. Some fellow prisoners were also Christians, and they taught him what he should do to be saved. He learned that he had never been baptized according to the Scriptures and needed to be baptized.

He served his time and came out of jail in 1962 just a year before his mother died. At first he was humble and spiritually motivated, but before long he returned to a rough life out in the oil fields of Oklahoma. He was often drunk and took drugs. His mouth was foul and his behavior very obnoxious. For more than twenty years he forgot the promises he made to God while in prison. In 1985

he attended my father's funeral and was so obnoxious, I said to myself that I didn't care if I ever saw him again. But the Lord had something more in store for him. In 1987 the doctors revealed to him that his heart was very enlarged, like a cow's heart, and that he would soon die if he didn't change his ways. Many nights in those days he would hunt raccoons all night and drink. He often woke up in a ditch, not really knowing where he was. The doctor's words, though, hit home with him. He remembered all the promises he had made to God and to his older sister while he was in prison. Frantically he approached every preacher in town to find spiritual help. But none of them had time for him. One threatened to call the law.

Then he remembered the two family members who taught him in prison. My father was dead, but he knew that I was a preacher. He called me one Friday night and asked me to come to his house and teach him. The next morning I was there and had my Bible. He knew he hadn't been baptized according to the Scriptures and wanted me to teach him what the Bible said. So I began in Matthew 3 and told him how Jesus fulfilled all righteousness and was baptized of John. I showed him that the one who believes and is baptized will be saved (Mk. 16:16). We saw that the baptism was the new birth of water and the Spirit (John 3:5). We learned we need to repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of sin. (Acts 2:38). We saw that in baptism we go down into the water and come up out of the water (Acts 8:38-39) and that preaching Christ includes baptism. We learned that when we are baptized, our sins are washed away (Acts 22:16). We learned that baptism is into Christ's death, that we're buried and raised with him to walk in newness of life. Our old man of sin is crucified with him so that we can be free from sin (Rom. 6:3-7). We learned many other things about baptism that day, and five precious souls went down into the lake behind their house and were baptized. From that day he never drank again.

He began attending church every time the doors were open. His language was godly and his attitude one of love and faith. He began reaching out to prisoners at the county courthouse, and soon many were being baptized. Then he went to other county jails. Soon he went to the Oklahoma state prisons where he taught young men who had fallen into the sinful traps he himself had known. He spoke straight about sin but with lots of love; and they responded. From 1987 onward he baptized more than a thousand souls into Christ with his own hands. Never had I seen such a great change in a man.

If God could make a difference in his life, He can make a difference in yours. He can help you overcome every sin in your life and become the kind of person you want to be. My favorite saying is, "I'm not all I want to be; I'm not all I ought to be; I'm not all I'm gonna be; but, thank God, I'm not what I used to be." God can help each of us become the person He intended for us to be. You can win over sin, if you will give yourself to the Lord and obey the gospel. He'll help you overcome every sin and problem you face. Faith truly is the victory in Christ our Lord. Are you willing to come to Him?

God can help you overcome temptation by not letting anything bigger than you come upon you. He can help you by providing a way

of escape so you can endure it (1 Cor. 10:13). The Christian has a lot of help from God and from other faithful Christians. They have the power of the blood of Christ to forgive them and wash away their sins (1 John 1:7). They have the power of truth to keep them from believing a lie. They have the power of the love of God to sustain them in hard times (Rom. 8:37-39). They also have the power of prayer, the ear of God.

We have a wonderful life as Christians, a life full of faith, hope and love. We have a Father who watches out for us, a Lord Jesus who leads us through his Word, and a church family to keep us strong. Let us never be overcome by the world, but let us overcome the world by our faith in Christ and our commitment to serve Him.

I pray that today you'll become a Christian, so that Christ may help you to overcome all the evils that can easily beset you. Believe in Him, repent of your sins, confess His name, and be baptized for the remission of your sins. Won't you do that today?

My uncle Curt is my mother's youngest brother. She and my father taught him the gospel, and twenty-five years later he obeyed it. I said in my heart in 1985, "It would suit me fine never to see him again." But I was so wrong to judge him and to fail to understand what God can do in the lives of people. God is very powerful. His Word to pierce hearts and change lives. But God will not force anyone to obey Him. You've got to be like Curt and want to be saved, want to have all your sins removed by the Lord. After Curt came to Christ he lived a life of love for God and for His word. He spent the rest of his days serving.

You don't have to settle for a life of sin. You can change your heart and life and serve the Lord. Whatever you have done in the past can be forgiven as you repent. God can take your broken life and heal it with His love and truth. There is no need to waste another day in sin and regret. Come serve the Lord with all your heart and soul. If you're not a Christian, obey the gospel. If you're a wayward Christian who has quit church, come back to the Lord and live as one of His people again. You don't have to live life without God. You can overcome!

With all the blessings of God, it is no wonder that we should draw near to Him always. Where are you in your life? Do you have a close, loving, peaceful relationship with God? Do you have peace of mind and heart inside? God hasn't left you; it may be that you have left God. The greatest need of our time is to know God and to draw close to Him again by listening and obeying His Word. Won't you do that?

We do not ask for money on this program, because all the expenses are paid by your friends at Concord Road Church of Christ in Brentwood, Tennessee. If you are in our area, worship with us some Sunday at 9 am or 6 pm. You are always welcome and wanted. If you cannot visit us, there is a wonderful congregation of the churches of Christ near you.

We'd love to hear from you. Until next week, we remind you to look to God for all your answers. God bless you and we love you from Concord Road.

Phil Sanders
Concord Road Church of Christ
8221 Concord Rd., Brentwood, TN 37027
1-877-226-5747
phil@God-answers.org www.God-answers.org